



Decentralization Support Program— Phase II Extension

Annual Performance Report

November 2005

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Decentralization Support Program— Phase II Extension

Annual Performance Report

Contract AEP-I-00-00-00017-00
October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2005

Prepared for
USAID/Benin/DG

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Annual Performance Report

October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2005

Project: Decentralization Support Program - Phase II
Increase Civil Society's Participation in Decentralization and Foster
Governance through Anti-Corruption Initiatives in Benin (Decentralization
and Anti-Corruption Support) Project (Phase II Extension)

Client: USAID/Benin/DG

SO Number: 680-003

Contract No: AEP-I-00-00-00017-00 Task Order No: 807

Project Implementation Timeframe: September 8, 2003 to June 14, 2005 (Phase II)
June 15, 2005 to June 14, 2007
(Phase II Extension)

Project Funding: \$1,467,029 (Phase II)
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\$2,831,732

RTI Project No: 07868.807

Submitted by: Omar Touré – Chief of Party (as of June 24, 2005).

Submitted to: USAID/Benin-DG CTO: Bernice Noudegnessi

Submitted on: November 15, 2005

CC: USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC)

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Acronyms

ALCRER	Association de Lutte Contre le Racisme, l'Ethnocentrisme et le Régionalisme
APE	Association des Parents d'Elèves
APRETECTRA	Association des Personnes Rénovatrice des Technologies Traditionnelles
B-DACS	Benin Decentralization and Anti-Corruption Project
CAO	Centre Afrika Obota
CAPE	Coordination des Associations des Parents d'Elèves
CC	Chambre de Comptes (de la Cours Suprême)
CMVP	Cellule de Moralisation de la Vie Publique
COGEC	Comite de Gestion des Centres de Santé
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTO	Cognizant technical officer
DG	Democratic Governance
D&G	Democracy and Governance
DNMP	Direction National des Marches Publiques
DSP	Decentralization Support Program
EQUIPE	Projet Equité et Qualité dans l'Enseignement Primaire au Bénin
FICADEX	Cabinet d'Etudes
FONAC	Front des Organisations Nationales Contre la Corruption
GOB	Government of Benin
HAADI	Hygiène et Assainissement en Appui au Développement Institutionnel
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IDLO	International Development Law Organization
IGF	Inspection Générale des Finances
IQC	Indefinite Quantity Contract
IR	Intermediate Result
LG	Local Government
LOP	Life of Project
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MJCD	Mutuelle des Jeunes Chrétiens pour le Développement
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OLCC	Observatoire de Lutte Contre la Corruption
PDC	Plan de Développement Communal
PDGG	Participatory Development and Governance Group
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
PRODECOM	Projet de Développement des Communes
RFP	Request for Proposals
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
SO	Strategic Objective
STTA	Short-Term Technical Assistance
TA	Technical Assistance
TI	Transparency international
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

I. Introduction

RTI implemented the AEP-I-00-00-00017-00 Task Order No 807 contract for the Decentralization Support Program - Phase II Project from September 8, 2003 to June 14, 2005. On June 2, 2005 USAID/Benin amended the Task Order and added two additional years, as of June 15, 2005. This extension builds on the original Phase II decentralization program successes and adds a new and significant anti-corruption component as well as an added emphasis on the role of civil society in governance. This extension phase is officially entitled "Increase Civil Society's Participation in Decentralization and Foster Governance through Anti-Corruption Initiatives in Benin" or, more simply, Benin Decentralization and Anti-Corruption Support (B-DACS) Project.

This annual report is presented in two parts. The first part provides information on activities conducted during the period October 1, 2004 to June 14, 2005 representing the last 8½ months of the original Task Order. The second provides information on activities from June 15, 2005 to September 30, 2005 which marks the first 3½ months of the amended Task Order.

The main objectives of the original Task Order were to:

- 1) Reinforce the capacities of national, departmental and communal actors and civil society organizations in local governance through training, and
- 2) Fund and provide technical assistance for managing micro-projects at the communal level as a means to support the implementation of local development plans, as they relate to education, health, water and sanitation and other citizen priorities.

From the Contract Scope of Work:

Activities under this Task Order shall support achievement of USAID/Benin Special Objective: **"Improved governance in productive and social sectors."** Specifically these activities support:

Intermediate Result 1: "Participation and management capacities of decentralized stakeholders increased", and

Sub-intermediate Result # 1: "Local and national officials' governance capacities strengthened."

From the Strategic Planning Exercises carried out by the USAID Benin Governance Team in January and February 2004, the following indicators were assigned:

Activities under the USAID Decentralization Support Program (task order) shall support achievement of USAID/Benin Special Objective: **"Improved governance in productive and social sectors."** Specifically these activities support:

1. ***Special Objective Level Indicator:*** "Level of participation of local producer groups in decision making and planning at the communal level is increased". ***(Added Performance Indicator).***

2. **Intermediate Result # 1:** "Participation and management capacities of decentralized stakeholders increased."
 - a. **Sub-intermediate Result # 1:** "Local and national officials' governance capacities strengthened."
 - b. **Sub-intermediate Result # 2:** "Number of governmental decisions influenced by Civil Society organizations is increased." (**Added Performance Indicator**).
 - c. **Sub-intermediate Result # 3:** "Number of local Communal Development Plans is increased in USAID targeted Communes." (**Added Performance Indicator**).

The Phase II Extension (June 15, 2005 to June 14, 2007) B-DACS Project has per contract modification, the additional objectives of:

- 1) Increasing civil society participation and oversight in local development through training, advocacy and monitoring of micro projects, in order to reduce corruption at the local level; and
- 2) Reinforcing the capacities of public auditing institutions and advocacy groups' to investigate, track and denounce corrupt behaviors.

Activities under this task order will support achievement of USAID/Benin Special Objective "Improved governance in productive and social sectors." Specifically, these activities support:

- 1.) **Intermediate Result 1:** "Participation and management capacities of decentralized stakeholders increased."
 - a) **Sub-intermediate Result # 1.1:** "Local and national officials' governance capacities strengthened."
 - b) **Sub-intermediate Result # 1.2:** "NGO networks, women's group and associations' capacities in advocacy strengthened."
- 2.) **Intermediate Result 2:** "Strengthened mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability."
 - a) **Sub-intermediate Result # 2.1:** "Supreme Audit Institutions capacities reinforced."
 - b) **Sub-intermediate Result # 2.2:** "Strengthened ability of CSOs to fight corruption"

The expected results for the decentralization component are:

- a) Increased participation of civil society organizations in decision-making processes within USAID-assisted communes;
- b) Improved ability of USAID-assisted communes to initiate and implement local development plans.

The expected results for the anti-corruption component are:

- a) Increased investigation and verification capacities of GOB auditing (control) institutions;
- b) Strengthened ability of civil society organizations to fight corruption.

RTI Phase 2 and Phase 2 Extension (B-DACS) Staff Members

Phase 2 (September 8, 2003 to June 14, 2005)

Name	Position
Dean Swerdlin	Chief of Party (through November 5, 2004)
Alexis Bokodaho	Training Coordinator
Jean-Pierre Hounkpé	Micro-grants Manager (as of October 4, 2004)
Bénédicte Goncalves	Financial Manager
Natacha d'Almeida	Administrative Assistant

Phase 2 Extension (June 15, 2005 to June 14, 2007)

Name	Position
Omar Touré	Chief of Party
Alexis Bokodaho	Training Coordinator (through June 30, 2005)
Jean-Pierre Hounkpé	Micro-grants Manager
Mireille Comlan	Training and M&E Assistant
Marc Doukoui	Field Coordinator – Mono/Couffo
Nicole Amoussou	Field Coordinator- Borgou/Alibori
Bénédicte Goncalves	Accountant and Financial Manager
Natacha d'Almeida	Administrative Assistant



II. October 1, 2004 to June 14, 2005 representing the last 8½ months of the original Task Order

1. A comparison of actual activities and accomplishments of the year with the plan established for the year.

The plan established at the beginning of FY 2005 was to complete the remaining three of five originally planned training series covering all themes (see page 7 for the list of themes). Since we were somewhat behind schedule at the start of the year, it was decided to cover the remaining sessions in two, rather than three series. This saved time since we were able to organize and review the request for applications and subsequent follow-up over two cycles, rather than three. Due to this decision and an accelerated pace of training activities, working with local training firms we were able to complete all planned activities by June 15, 2005.

Performance Requirement 1: Reinforce the capacities of national, departmental and communal actors and civil society organizations in local governance through training.

1.1 Training Achievements

The major activities that RTI accomplished for this period were:

1. RTI selected and contracted several local consulting / training firms to carry out the third and fourth training courses / activities;
2. RTI and its training partners completed final production of training documentation for the third and fourth training series; including participant manuals, trainers guides and plans, and training reports for each course / module;
3. RTI prepared the course content for the third and fourth set of training courses, and assisted the local training contractors with their training plans;
4. RTI prepared and implemented training of trainers events for local training contractors;
5. RTI selected participants for the third and fourth set of training events;
6. RTI and its local training partners delivered the third and fourth set of training courses / modules.
7. RTI planned and implemented Decentralization Training Steering Committee meetings;
8. RTI organized and participated in important coordination meetings with other development partners, Ministry officials, and USAID sector teams.

RTI held a total of 32 training events during this 8½ month period that were attended by 771 participants. The table below provides summary information on the numbers of participants and themes covered during FY 2005.

Summary Training Information FY 2005						
Module N°	Module Title	Firm	No. of sessions	Men	Women	Total
103	Decentralized cooperation policy	Sud Consulting	3	61	12	73
306	Strategic and operational planning	Institut Bingos	3	53	18	71
403	Local finance planning and management	FICADEX	2	39	3	42
405	Land management	IREA	2	56	0	56
201	Political parties and their roles	FICADEX	3	51	10	61
301/305	Delegation of authority and financial implications of deconcentration	FICADEX	3	64	7	71
307	Human resource management	FICADEX	3	59	14	73
502	The decision-making process	MJCD-ONG	2	50	3	53
504	Negotiation: techniques and capacities	INSTITUT BINGOS	3	58	12	70
505	Time management	INSTITUT BINGOS	3	51	11	62
404	Public services management	FICADEX	2	50	1	51
406	Local project management	Sud Consulting	2	53	2	55
407	Workshop on the Development of a Strategy to Streamline the Commune Development Plans (PDC)	RTI	1	32	1	33
Total sessions			32	677	94	771



Performance Requirement 2: Fund and provide technical assistance for managing micro-projects at the communal level as a means to support the implementation of local development plans, as they relate to education, health, improved municipal services, etc.

Project Progress on Outputs for Requirement 2

2.1 Micro-project Achievements

Of the project's 26 target communes, 22 submitted micro-project proposals to RTI for support of activities within their approved PDCs (community development plans). The proposals submitted targeted the education, economic development and health (through sanitation and hygiene initiatives) sectors.

RTI organized a selection committee composed of a prefecture representative from both Borgou/Alibori and Mono/Couffo, a representative from USAID project partner EQUIPE, a Beninese technical expert from a civil society organization, and three RTI staff for micro-project selection. The committee met two times to review proposals and approved a total of 13 proposals judged pertinent in regards to pre-established criteria.

No.	Department	Commune	Description of Micro-project	USAID Funding
1	Alibori	Gogounou	Construction of a butchers' shop in Gounarou	5,000,000
2	Alibori	Bembérékè	Construction 4 latrine blocks (4 doors each) in 4 schools	3,237,888
3	Borgou	Tchaourou	Construction of a minimum of 212 school desks	3,709,745
4	Couffo	Toviklin	Construction at the pre-school in Toviklin of a classroom, office and storage area	4,798,944
5	Mono	Comé	Construction of 4 market stalls in Comé	4,661,000
6	Mono	Grand-Popo	Construction of 4 market stalls in Grand-Popo	4,661,000
7	Alibori	Kandi	Construction of 180 school desks	2,650,000
8	Alibori	Karimama	Construction of 210 school desks	3,570,000
9	Borgou	Pèrèrè	Construction of 3 latrine blocks	2,550,000
10	Couffo	Klouékanmey	Construction of 2 market stalls in Klouékanmè market	2,494,137
11	Couffo	Lalo	Construction of a market warehouse in Hlassamey	3,000,000
12	Couffo	Djakotomey	Construction of 3 latrine blocks	2,550,000
13	Mono	Lokossa	Construction of two classrooms	4,999,979
TOTAL				47,882,693

The project had set 10 as the minimum number of micro-projects for funding but, in fact, thirteen were funded at a total funding cost of 64,051,006 F CFA. The USAID funding provided by RTI totaled 47,882,693 FCFA – or 75% of the total. The remaining 16,168,313 F CFA – or 25% - came from commune cash and in-kind contributions.

Micro-project implementation stressed a public-private partnership approach whereby various commune actors played important roles.

Sharing responsibilities – Roles in DSP Micro-grants component	
Partner	Major Roles
The Mayor's Office	Proposal development Project leadership Commune budget cash commitments (cost-share) Outreach for civil society participation Project monitoring Reporting
Tax collector Receveur/percepteur	Financial accounting of contributions from the Mayor's office and of RTI/USAID Payment to contractors
Civil Society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs • Management committees • APE (Parent Associations) • Health Committees • Youth Associations 	Proposal development Communication mobilization In-kind contributions (labor, construction materials) Monitoring of work and of final reception of contracted work
Local Contractors	Pre-financing of work Contracted construction and other work Work guarantees
RTI/USAID	Training Financing Technical advice Project monitoring & evaluation Project management

2. Reasons why activities were delayed or not carried out during the year, if appropriate

RTI carried out all planned activities. In addition, we prepared a special training event – and creation of a new training course; Module 407 - Harmonizing Local Development Plans (communal) with Departmental and National Level objectives and planning. This had not been part of the original work plan but was added due to requests from requests from the prefects in Alibori/Borgou and Mono/Couffo, as well as the PRODECOM project staff.

3. Progress made towards achieving targets for process and results indicators (based on valid data collection and analysis).

3.1.1 Training Progress in achieving targets

Over the year the major results of the training component were:

- Successful development and initiation of 2 of the 4 series of training sessions covering 14 of the project's 26 training themes.
- Strengthening of 5 of the 9 training institutions used in the project and their ability to initiate and provide training on important decentralization issues.
- Training of 771 of the total of 1,344 elected officials, CSOs and local, regional and national government workers trained through the project.
- Practical use of various training themes by participants in their professional positions thus impacting on promoting effective decentralization.
- Use of media for outreach through: 2 of the 4 total decentralization issue articles appearing in the local newspaper Le Municipal during the LOP; specific training articles in appearing in several newspapers such as the Le Municipal, La Nation and Le Matinal for every training activity; and broadcast reports and interviews for many training events covered by local radio.

3.1.2 Impact of training

Training Impact Indicators (Additional information on training indicators was presented in Quarterly Report 6 which indicates that the training sessions were effectively conducted and that they have helped participants better understand their roles and responsibilities and provided them with tools to help them better execute their responsibilities).

Data provided below should help inform the indicators requested by USAID, which include the following:

- Level of participation of Producer Unions in the decision-making process at the communal level.
- Number of government decisions influenced by Civil Society Organizations.

Data collection methodology

Sampling

RTI conducted an informal survey on a sample of 16 communes selected randomly, but on the basis of 8 communes each for Mono/Couffo and Alibori/Borgou departments respectively.

Communes surveyed in June 2005

ALIBORI/BORGOU	MONO/COUFFO
----------------	-------------

12

Tchaourou	Djakotomé
Pèrèrè	Dogbo
N'dali	Toviklin
Bembéréké	Klouékanmè
Gogounou	Athiémé
Kandi	Lokossa
Karimama	Comé
Parakou	Grand-Popo

Data collection tools

Two types of questionnaires were developed, targeting first locally elected officials and the municipal staff and secondly civil society actors.

Data collected concerned the following:

- *For the questionnaire designed for locally elected officials and municipal staff:*
 - Examples of utilization of the skills learned from the training ;
 - The number of decisions made by the mayor during the period from June 2004 to June 2005.
 - Information about decisions which were, in their opinion, influenced by the CSOs.
- *Regarding the questionnaire designed for actors of the Civil Society:*
 - The target group includes first those who participated in the modules on "Civil Society and its Role" and "Lobbying and Advocacy."
 - Then, the goal was to determine if the actors were able to use the skills learned through the training in order to participate in the decision-making process at the local level.
 - Finally, specific information is requested about the types of decisions that seem to have been influenced by the actors.

The main results achieved

A total of 15 actors of the civil society were surveyed. A break down of this number is as follows:

Producer Unions	NGOs	Other (e.g., CAPE, COGEC)	Total
4	2	9	15

A total of 14 out of the 15, or 93%, answered that they used learned skills to participate in development activities in their communities. The main areas in which they believed they had influenced decisions in their communes included the following: health, environment, social welfare and the rights of children. They often achieved this by discussing with local authorities in order to push these officials to make decisions. The interviews with the 15 actors identified 8

specific administrative orders (arrêtés) that they believed were positively influenced by civil society, 7 of which occurred in the Mono/Couffo Department.¹

Training Component Success Stories

Participants during the interviews provided examples of how the RTI training sessions resulted in specific successes. Some examples are provided below:

Training Session on the Role of Civil Society

"Before RTI's intervention, there was almost no consultation between the locally elected officials and civil society stakeholders. After the training sessions on the role of the civil society, the Mayor of Lokossa, who was invited to participate in one of the sessions, called a meeting of the civil society organizations in his commune to discuss the establishment of a consultation framework. This initiative by the Mayor directly resulted from the RTI sponsored training session to discuss the role of the civil society." (Testimony from Mrs Agossou Mireille, Director of the Legal Assistance Center in Lokossa).

This forum, held from August 10 to 12, 2004 in Lokossa, provided an opportunity for elected officials, NGOs and other associations to discuss their specific roles in the development of the commune.

Training Session on Political Parties and Their Roles

"This training helped me explain to the mayor and the counsellors the roles that political parties must play in our commune. After receiving these explanations, the communal council authorized two political party leaders to travel to Guyancourt (France) as part of the twin-city activities underway between this city and Comé".

(Statement provided by the second Deputy-Mayor of the commune of Comé).

Training on the Delegation of Authority and the Financial Implications of Deconcentration

During the evaluation of the training session, the Secretary General of the Djakotomé Commune declared:

"I participated in the training and provided feedback to the mayor. This helped the mayor delegate to the Secrétaire Générale the authority to sign certain documents and to delegate authority to the two deputy-mayors".

Many mayors in Benin have a tendency to assume by themselves all of the decision-making authority. The training has helped change this practice.

¹ The total number of arrêtés issued by the mayors in the 16 communes that were visited during the period from June 2004 to June 2005 is estimated at 370. We have not determined how many of the 370 were influenced by civil society.

Responding to Needs: Helping Streamline the Commune Development Plans (PDC) Approval Process

In Benin's new decentralized governance system, Commune Development Plans need to be developed by local government in collaboration with local stakeholders and then these plans need to be submitted to the Regional Prefects for approval. While a number of actors have provided help to communes in developing PDCs, there had been no thought that Prefects might need some assistance in understanding the process or help in knowing what criteria to use in judging the plans.

During FY 2005, in response to requests from the Prefects in USAID's Project zones of Alibori/Borgou and Mono/Couffo, as well as from the European Union financed PRODECOM project staff, RTI provided technical assistance and training to develop clear and specific guidelines, and check lists of norms and criteria for reviewing PDCs and making sure that they are in coherence with Departmental and National level strategic objectives and planning efforts. Up to the time of this workshop, no adequate tools were available to help the Prefects to carry-out this task rigorously and effectively.

The RTI strategy made sure to involve those government institutions in charge of decentralization issues and the local branch of the Ministry of Planning not only to benefit from their technical knowledge but ensure ownership of the tools. Because of RTI's intervention, the Prefects now have:

- A tool to help verify that the communes have developed their PDCs in accordance with the national guidelines for local planning.
- A tool to help assess the level of coherence between the PDCs and the national and/or regional strategies.

These tools were tested in the Mono/Couffo and Alibori/Borgou departments and are currently employed by each Préfet in the Mono/Couffo and Alibori/Borgou. Furthermore, the Ministry of Interior has decided to make these tools available for use country-wide. While not part of the original scope of work, RTI's intervention met an immediate need and has served to support Benin's decentralization process.

3.2.1 Micro-project results

The major results of the micro-project component were:

- Successful completion of 13 micro-projects financed at a total cost of 64,051,006 FCFA, including USAID contribution through RTI of 47,882,693 FCFA and with 16,168,313 FCFA contributed by the communes.
- Each micro-project contributed to attainment of the commune's development plan.
- Communes were given an opportunity to develop proposals and leverage additional resources to meet specific needs of their development plan. This experience helped

locally elected officers develop better skills in seeking funds from donors in order to finance some of the projects listed in their plans.

- Commune officials, civil society and elected officials gained valuable experience in developing, presenting, partnering and managing micro-projects. During implementation RTI staff was also able to provide important technical assistance to these key players. In all communes, Micro-project Manager Jean-Pierre Hounkpé provided technical assistance to both the Mayor's office and tax-collector on the correct procedures and documentation necessary in contracting work to entrepreneurs. Prior to the assistance, these procedures and regulations had largely been ignored.



- Local management of these micro-projects helped demonstrate to concerned communes best practices in monitoring and management transparency for grants or financial assistance received by the commune and helped promote public private partnership concepts. Since in most communes the micro-projects helped the civil society and locally elected officials collaborate better in order to ensure successful implementation of development projects, actors implicitly or explicitly recognize that the development of their commune is a shared responsibility.

3.2.2. Impact of Micro-projects on Communes and Beneficiaries

Education Sector

Six micro projects were initiated in the education sector at a total cost of 32,881,701 FCFA. The USAID/RTI contribution was 22,966,556 FCFA or 70% with the counterpart contribution totaling 9,915,145 FCFA or 30%.



These micro-projects achieved improved classroom and schooling conditions for 1,274 students through provision of desks, new classrooms and latrines. In Toviklin (Couffo Department) the micro-project allowed 70 children aged 2 ½ to 5 years old (45% of whom are girls) to participate in pre-school programs in a safe, secure and more conducive for learning environment. The micro-project also inspired the commune to seek and successfully obtain additional funding from the Hygiène et Assainissement en Appui au Développement Institutionnel (HAADI) to build latrines for the pre-school. In Bembéréké (Borgou Department), four schools benefited from latrine construction improving hygiene and health conditions for more than 450 students.



Toviklin Pre-School School Director Mr. Paul MIBLESSO: *"Because of the furnishings, this year the children have learned to write in notebooks. Before, without desks, they never had an opportunity to learn." (Before the school only had stools for children to sit on). "Now when the children enter first grade they will have a much better chance at succeeding."*

Lokossa Primary Parent Association Member Mr. Djima GBADMASSI: *"The construction of the building has made this year's school entry much easier. After the storm destroyed the classroom building last year, we would have had to double up the students in each class."*

Economic Sector

The five micro-projects in the economic sector involved construction of market stalls, a butchery facility and a warehouse. The total cost of these projects was 25,088,305 FCFA of which 21% was financed by the communes and 79% by RTI/USAID. These projects had three objectives: contribute to economic growth and income for private sector players; increase local municipality receipts; and, improve the physical environment and work conditions. The funding of these micro-projects have permitted 250 women market vendors to have better market stalls and better working conditions. As of this date there has not been a study of the impact of the women's revenues but in Com  there has been a 16% increase in municipal tax revenues collect from market fees. In Gogounou there are at least 20 butchers that are now using the newly constructed facility.



During the phase 2 extension, data collection will be pursued to better determine the impact of each of these micro-projects.

Public Health Sector



The population that frequents the markets, schools, health centers and youth center that were provided with the latrines through micro-project activities now has better access to latrines that respect standards for hygiene. The investment for the latrine construction micro-projects totaled 6,081,000 FCFA of which 16% was funded by commune contributions.

Micro Projects Component Success Stories

Comé Public Private Partnership Success Story

"We just want to see this type of partnership repeated and expanded – we have all benefited," says Madame Sidonie AMOUSSOU, an elected Commune Councilor in, Mono Department in the Republic of Benin, who helped promote the partnership between the commune government, a women's market association and a leading local NGO. As part of RTI International's Decentralization Support Program funded by USAID, RTI International is awarding a series of micro-projects to help commune authorities meet some of the critical needs in social and economic sectors. Criteria for selection for funding includes having the activity inscribed in the Communal Development Plan elaborated by the commune in conjunction with active citizen participation, significant matching contribution (15% or more) and a strategy for sustainability.

The new approach to governance in Benin also entails a greater acceptance of non-government organizations, communal government and the private sector working together. While each justifiably has their own interests and perspectives, common ground often does exist and can produce mutually beneficial results. Comé is an excellent example of this. To help develop the Communal Development Plan, the Comé Council counted heavily on the Executive Director of APRETECTRA (Association des Personnes Rénovatrice des Technologies Traditionnelles), Mr. Gabriel Degbeffand.

Mr. Degbeffand, who worked as a UN volunteer in Togo, as a UNESCO officer in Benin and as the Director of APRETECTRA for the last 11 years, has developed many project proposals over this time and thus had the technical capacity to help the Council put together the Communal Development Plan as well as the micro-project submission to RTI. While volunteering his time (valued at 450,000 CFA) for this effort, Mr. Degbeffand is also looking forward to eventually getting communal contracts for some of the services rendered – something unheard of in the past in Benin.

Madame Sidonie AMOUSSOU, who happens to be the only woman councilor among the 66 councilors in Mono Region, is very pleased with the focus of the RTI activity that has built four new market stalls in Comé's central market that will particularly serve Comé's women. Market women have been asking for communal investment to improve the market infrastructure. With the Comé market expanding – and attracting more merchants and traders from not only Benin but increasingly Togo, many market women are forced to present their wares on the ground and without defined limits.

This makes presentation and cleanliness more problematic and also makes collection of market fees (50 CFA to 300 CFA per day depending on the category of wares and quantity of merchandise) more difficult for commune assessors. The commune thus views improving the infrastructure as a means of increased tax revenues as well as meeting needs expressed by the women's market association – a key constituency. Each of the four new market stalls will serve an estimated twenty traders. With the once every five day market bringing in between 75,000 CFA to 125,000 CFA per market day, proceeds amount to an estimated 7,300,000 CFA annually, or \$16,222. (The annual budget for the Comé commune population of 60,243 is only 150,000,000 CFA, or \$333,333 – \$5.53 per person). The Market receipts thus account for some 5% of the commune budget. A local NGO, DENSEL 2000, has been contracted by the commune government to collect trash after each market day (a monthly contract of 120,000 CFA) – another example of a public contracted activity in Comé.

The RTI Project in Comé has four main partners.

- RTI/USAID is financing 4,661,000 CFA for construction (which has gone in the communal bank account and is managed by the Commune financial officer).
- APRETECTRA, which helped produce the project document, will also provide training on Strategies for Proper and Equitable Collection of Market Fees at a cost of 400,020 CFA, funded by the commune.
- Association des Femmes du Marché de Comé has contributed in-kind labor and services (for example: hauling water for concrete construction and providing guard services to protect project materials).
- The commune government is contributing a cash input of 986,020 CFA.



Since decentralization is really a new way of doing things in Benin, the micro-project has given all stakeholders fresh insight on how the new governance system can emerge. It also adds an important "learning by doing" aspect from the formal training that has been provided by RTI and others, to councilors and civil society officials alike, regarding the new decentralized system. The Second Adjoint of the Mayor in Comé, Marcellin AKAKPO, recently called the initiative a win-win-win proposition for the commune.

The President of the women's market association, Madame Victorine APEDO SEPEGNONNA, was asked about the public-private partnership that led to the construction of the market hangars. She made sure to stress her association's joy in working with APRETECTRA, the Council government and RTI International, her hope for continued collaboration and more initiatives and commitment to maintaining the investment – a very good sign of local ownership and responsibility.

4. Other information related to program progress and results.

Lessons Learned

A. Training component

Training of Trainers Approach - Strengthening Local Training Institutions

RTI's approach for training delivery was to go through existing training providers rather than deliver training sessions directly. This was done with the development philosophy of strengthening local institutions and promoting sustainability. RTI believes this approach has successfully helped local trainers and local training institutions improve their training approaches and develop increased capacity. RTI worked closely with each institution that was

awarded a training contract to fully understand the modules to be delivered and to agree on training methods and approaches. To date it is too early to know whether some of the institutions that have gained capacity will be able to procure contracts to deliver training in areas that RTI has helped strengthened, but our belief is that this is likely. We will endeavor to assess whether this occurs during the Task Order extension period.

B. Micro-projects Component

Public Private Partnership Approach

The Public-Private Partnership approach was deemed a good strategy by both mayors and local CSO groups. The approach encouraged more transparent management of activities, contributed to improving cost effectiveness and favored a citizen participatory approach.

This approach has also permitted local NGOs to help Communes through technical assistance contributions to Mayors who often suffer from skilled manpower in various technical domains. Additionally the success of this approach is being duplicated in other program development. For example, the Executive Director of APRETECTRA has affirmed he is adopting this approach in the elaboration of a market improvement plan for Grand Popo.

Effectiveness of Funds Management through Local Government

RTI initiated the project in accordance to the official regulations that funding should go through the local government. Respect for following the official procedures was widely appreciated. In the Mono and Couffo departments where banks exist and are able to make direct deposits to contractors for micro-projects, payments went more smoothly. In Borgou and Alibori, however, contractors deplored the slowness of payments from the communes and the fact they had to travel to Cotonou to cash check payments.

According to Mr. Prince Tohoun a building contractor who implemented the Tozoumè/B school construction in Lokossa, direct deposits are much better for contractors. In his case it was only a month after completion of the structure that he received final payment from the Receveur/percepteur. He states that this micro-project was much better than other government contracts he has received regarding payment. In fact, to this date he still awaits payment for two ministries for work he completed in 2003 and 2004.

Increased Cost Effectiveness

As regards cost effectiveness of the interventions the consensus of all participants is that the costs of micro-projects were less than through normal interventions with the quality equal or better than normal. According to Mr. Kpade Codjio Eugene, Maire of Grand Popo, the micro-project financing permitted achievement of 50% more market stalls that were of better quality than previous construction ordered. He stated: *We received 5,000,000 FCFA from USAID through RTI for market stall construction. In all we constructed 4 stalls that are larger than our previous market stall construction initiatives. Comparatively we have greatly increased the cost benefit ratio. We have two stalls in the market that are smaller that cost us just as much as the RTI/USAID funded stalls.*"

III. June 15, 2005 to September 30, 2005 which marks the first 3 ½ months of the amended Task Order

1. A comparison of actual activities and accomplishments of the year with the plan established for the year.

A. Decentralization Component

Listed below are the major planned decentralization activities established for the period June 15 to September 30, 2005 followed by comments on actual activities:

- *Mobilization and Launch Activities*

RTI drafted and offered employment contracts to all project staff retained for the Phase 2 extension with an effective date of June 15, 2005. During this period RTI also launched recruitment efforts for the two new Field Coordinators to be based in Mono/Couffo and Borgou/Alibori by drafting and placing an advertisement in a local newspaper, posting the advertisement in public venues (such as PVO bulletin boards) and receiving and classifying candidate dossiers.

In June RTI also finalized and signed a contract with Chief of Party Omar Touré. Mr. Touré arrived in Benin on June 26, 2005 and proceeded with his orientation to staff and Benin and with settling-in logistics.

As per the work schedule in the B-DACS Proposal, RTI implemented several launch activities during the second month of Phase II Extension implementation (July 15 – August 14). Home Office Project Manager Dan Gerber and Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist Eileen Reynolds traveled to Benin during the second month to complete administrative orientation for COP Touré, assist in finalization of recruitment of Field Coordinators, conduct team-building and Phase II Extension orientation sessions, assist in drafting of the detailed Year 3 annual work plan, and begin work on the Performance Monitoring Plan.

- *Orientation of Project Consultative Committee on Micro-grants criteria² and Process.*

RTI conducted an orientation workshop for the Project Consultative Committee members. The orientation helped review the mandate of the mayors who represent the

² The Project Consultative Committee sets the criteria for selection but a Micro-project section Committee selects the projects. The major difference in the committees is that Mayors sit on the Project Committee but that they don't sit on the selection committee to avoid conflicts of interest. In their place are Prefecture officials.

four departments of Mono, Couffo, Borgou and Alibori. Project officers from USAID-financed projects *Projet Équité et Qualité dans l'Enseignement Primaire au Bénin* with (Creative Associates International Inc) and *PHR Plus* confirmed their availability to participate in the advisory committee activities. Their presence within the Council helps RTI to benefit from their experience and develop synergies with their intervention sectors. Periodicity of the meeting changed from monthly to quarterly meetings.

RTI took advantage of this opportunity to emphasize cross-cutting objectives. An awareness-raising session was conducted by agents from *Projet SIDA 3 Benin*, a West African AIDS Project financed by the Canadian Cooperation.

- *Outreach and information campaigns to target communes on Micro-grants criteria and B-DACS project activities.*

RTI organized two training workshops in Lokossa and Parakou respectively on September 1st and 7th, 2005 targeting key-stakeholders involved the management of micro-projects and other decentralization activities. Sixty six (66) participants, (though only two women³) representing mayors, tax collectors, local development officers and financial affairs officers attended. The objectives of the workshop were:

- To mobilize major actors responsible for the design and management of micro-projects centered on the new vision of the project;
- To share micro-project selection criteria;
- To discuss and adopt overall indicators for measuring the results of the micro-grants program. It is RTI's intention not to impose a pre-determined set of indicators on these stakeholders but to develop these in partnership with them.



Mayors from Banikoara (left) and Tchaourou at the Parakou workshop on September 7, 2005.

The discussions brought out a number of issues for the extension phase of the B-DACS. These included the following:

1. Approximately half of the mayors mentioned that they would be reluctant to seek grants from RTI/USAID before the end of their fiscal year (the calendar year) due

³ The small number of women is due primarily to few women holding elected positions or positions in communal government. RTI intends to increasing women's participation by inviting all available women office holders as well as women civil society leaders when civil society participation is possible.

their major pre-occupation with the up-coming March 2006 Presidential elections. They suggested that RTI/USAID support be requested for the GOB fiscal year 2006. Despite explanations by the RTI team and tax collectors that this need not be a difficulty if accounting principles were followed, some mayors maintained their position. The major reasons for this include, among others, difficulties in mobilizing Commune contributions during the period and the risk of using the funds for other (i.e., campaign) purposes.

2. Open debates conducted with the participants helped in the development of indicators and their ownership by the mayors. This was quite important since at the beginning of the workshops, numerous participants felt that the draft indicators were « imported or imposed by donors ». By conducting the workshops in a participative manner and adjusting indicators to meet the mayors' concerns this perception was reversed.

Considering the relevance of the decentralization indicators, several communal officers mentioned the need to have a municipal staff responsible for data collection and indicator monitoring. The mayors also requested training and tools that would help them better monitor the indicators. (RTI will be addressing this need). Some of the mayors provided feedback, as follows.

Strategic Objective: Improved governance in social and productive sectors	
% of B-DACS micro-projects completed during the last fiscal year which have had a real impact on the targeted communes according to stakeholder survey (USAID)	
IR 1 Participation and management capacity of stakeholders increased at the decentralized level	
Sub IR 1.1 Local governments manage their own affairs in a more transparent manner and with increased citizen involvement	Sub IR 1.2 NGO Networks, Women's Groups and Associations capacities in Advocacy Strengthened
	Number of government decisions affected by civil society organizations (local level and above)
	UP's contribution in the financing of social sectors (level and nature)
	Number of decisions made at the communal level aimed at improving women's livelihood

- Micro-grants RFPs launched

By the end of the staff orientation workshop, it was clear that all micro-project management documents needed in-depth refining in order to adapt them to new requirements of the program. Therefore, the existing management documents were revised and improved and new others were designed. These included mainly the information data sheet concerning micro-project objectives and awarding criteria, the grant form, the project selection sheet in terms of updated documents; and the development of a draft grant agreement protocol.

The B-DACS micro grants manager completed this documentation and transmitted it to the Mayors on August 8, 2005. Following this, B-DACS organized information visits to

improve Mayors' understanding of the new outline for micro-project development as well as the selection criteria.

- Initial Micro-grants reviewed, approved and awarded.

Six communes (5 in Mono/Couffo and 1 in Borgou) submitted eight (8) micro-project proposals to RTI. The first meeting of the Micro-project selection committee was held on September 22, 2005. At this meeting the operating principles of the committee were discussed, the selection criteria confirmed and the 8 micro-project proposals reviewed. Four micro-projects were accepted under reservation of receiving acceptable complementary information. One micro-project needed to be thoroughly revised and re-submitted to the committee due to issues raised about its relevance. The committee recommended a site visit by RTI in order to ensure that the project in question was indeed a priority. For the Bopa commune, which had presented 3 micro-projects, the committee recommended to select one based on the priorities of the communities.

On September 27, 2005 the Micro-grants Manager provided detailed feedback, along with the recommendations, to each commune. As part of the technical assistance to be provided to the communes, the Micro-grants Manager created a document outlining lessons learned from the Phase 2 microgrants program, including some of the weaknesses in micro-grants implementation and sent this to all partner communes so that they take them into account when designing their micro-grants projects. Teams composed of the Micro-grants Manager and Field Coordinators conducted site visits to assist the communes in addressing recommendations made by the project selection committee.



Selection Commission meeting held on September 22, 2005.

- Begin mentoring with women's groups, CSOs and businesses and on advocacy strategies.

The B-DACS Program Assistant in charge of monitoring and evaluation began the process of designing assessment tools for our target groups (women's groups, CSOs

and businesses) to identify their training needs. Based on the needs-assessments, training strategies and modules will be developed to address priority needs.

- TA for Local Partnership Initiatives and Promotion.
- One of the major criteria for micro-project selection is the involvement of CSOs and departmental technical services in the designing and implementation of micro-grants projects developed by the communes. RTI's analysis of micro-grants projects conducted in Phase II indicated that the lack of serious CSO involvement is a weakness in most of the participating communes. Therefore, RTI highly recommended that the communes closely involve CSOs, especially women's organizations, depending on the skills and expertise needed to effectively implement and sustain their micro-project.
- Begin development for series of 6 Civil Society Workshops on identified themes.

RTI developed training needs assessment tools and the staff has started identifying CSOs and their training needs. Pre-diagnostic visits were conducted in Mono/Couffo and Borgou/Alibori. Considering the presence of SNV, Aid and Action and Plan International in the field and the fact that they are pursuing the same objectives, Mono Couffo and Borgou Alibori Coordinators integrated the approach of existing partnerships in order to develop synergies.

- Outreach to other anti-corruption and decentralization actors informing them of B-DACS objectives and strategy and information gathering on other agencies activities.

RTI established contacts with NGOs such as World Education, the Centre Africa Obota, SNV, Aid and Action in order to present the objectives of B-DACS and explore partnership opportunities. Officers of these organizations expressed their desire to partner with B-DACS on joint activities. Several activities have already been initiated by the project teams in the field on tools for CSO capacity building.

B. Anti-Corruption Component

Below are listed the major planned anti-corruption activities established for the period June 15, 2005 to September 30, 2005 followed by comments on actual activities:

- Mobilization and Launch Activities

Mobilization and launch activities were implemented as per B-DACS proposal schedule. See details in Decentralization Component section above.

- Partnership meetings with Chambre des Comptes (CC), Inspection Générale des Finances (IGF) and Commission Nationale de Régulation des Marchés Publics (CNRMP).

One important component of the Anti-Corruption support of B-DACS is the development of strong partnerships with government of Benin public auditing institutions and Public

Procurement regulators in order to strengthen their capacity to fight corruption. RTI first held introduction visits to public auditing institutions aimed at ascertaining their expectations and sharing with them the new vision of the program. Following these meetings RTI drafted and shared protocol agreements and terms of reference for the participatory diagnostic process with each organization. The B-DACs team held working sessions with the IGF and the CC. Following these sessions? the IGF and CC designated their teams that are expected to participate with RTI in the designing and facilitation of the diagnostic exercises and the development of the capacity building plan. We were unable to hold a working session with the CNRMP due to the absence of the President. She nevertheless indicated that she would meet with RTI in the near future to review and amend the proposed partnership documents.

- Promotion of networking among CSOs and associations (potential exchanges).

B-DACs organized an information workshop as part of the launch of the micro-grants projects for CSOs that are active in the fight against corruption. The workshop focused on the presentation of B-DACS guidelines and discussion of the program's performance indicators. Participating CSOs expressed interest in the various components of the program as presented. However, they expressed reservations about the possibility of influencing the legislative regulatory framework, considering the political agenda of the country, which is characterized by the pre-electoral, electoral and post-electoral periods. They believe that it would be difficult to mobilize the parliament during this period.

It was suggested that a common reflection be conducted in order to identify the best strategies to achieve this objective within the time frame determined. B-DACS will include the issue of constraints to legislative action against corruption in a workshop to be held during the next quarter with Anti corruption CSOs.

- CSO Anti-corruption RFPs

RTI's Chief of Party developed management tools and grant application documents with support from the Micro-grants Manager and the Financial Assistant. RTI also prepared a draft partnership protocol in order to help RTI and CSOs achieve a more open and more strategic partnership.

2. Reasons why activities were delayed or not carried out during the year, if appropriate
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A. Decentralization Component

All planned decentralization component activities for the first 3 ½ months were carried out.

B. Anti-Corruption Component

- Organizational Diagnostic Exercise with Chambres des Comptes (anticipated) and Inspection Général des Finances (anticipated).
- Institutional Strengthening Plan discussed in collaboration with CC.
- Institutional Strengthening Plan discussed in collaboration with IGF.

The three above mentioned activities were not achieved during this past reporting period (June 15, 2005 to September 30, 2005). This is explained by the unavailability of supreme auditing institutions during the month of September, which is the period originally scheduled for the participatory diagnostic activities. However, it should be noted that IGF, CC and CNRMP all agree with the idea of conducting the participatory diagnostic exercise in their institutions and this is expected to take place during the next quarter.

3. Progress made towards achieving targets for process and results indicators (based on valid data collection and analysis).

A. Decentralization Component

The major activity during this 3 ½ month period was to develop and propose a realistic and valid performance monitoring plan. For the decentralization component the following has been proposed:

IR 1 Participation and Management Capacities of decentralized stakeholders are increased

Sub IR 1.1 Local Governments Manage their Affairs in a More Transparent Manner and with Greater Citizen Involvement

A critical aspect of good local governance is for the government to seek and secure citizen involvement. Currently, many local governments in Benin seek citizen involvement only to develop priorities or simply as an academic exercise. However, local governments need to understand that greater citizen involvement can lead to partnerships to improve service delivery, ensure transparency and accountability and monitor and evaluate results. Accountability and transparency are nurtured by participation, and this ties in directly to both improved decentralized government and to anti-corruption objectives.

Sub IR 1.2 Increased participation of civil society organizations in local decision making in the communes in Mono, Couffo, Alibori, and Borgou

The complement to local governments accepting and seeking greater citizen involvement is civil society fully understanding their roles as both local government partners and monitors. A responsible civil society will seek opportunities to work in collaboration with local government and other stakeholders (such as the private sector) not only in setting priorities but in implementing activities. Civil society has an equally important role to play in monitoring performance of government and ultimately of itself, helping ensure CSOs are also accountable, transparent and effective.

B-DACs Annual Report Indicators

Strategic Objective: Improved governance in social and productive sectors	
% of B-DACS micro-projects completed during the last fiscal year which have had a real impact on the targeted communes according to stakeholder survey (USAID)	
IR 1 Participation and management capacity of stakeholders increased at the decentralized level	
Sub IR 1.1 Local governments manage their own affairs in a more transparent manner and with increased citizen involvement	Sub IR 1.2 NGO Networks, Women's Groups and Associations capacities in Advocacy Strengthened
	Number of government decisions affected by civil society organizations (local level and above)
	UP's contribution in the financing of social sectors (level and nature)
	Number of decisions made at the communal level aimed at improving women's livelihood

RTI will present the data for the performance indicators in the annual report for FY 06. There is no data available as yet as activities have just begun.

B. Anti-Corruption Component

For the anti-corruption component, the following was proposed:

IR 2 Improved mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability

Sub IR 2.1 Reinforced Capacity of Public Control Institutions

Grand corruption extending through networks of patrons and clients limit the ability of public control institutions to provide effective accountability, but there are several reasons for USAID to support them nonetheless. First, the activism of leaders within the Chamber of Accounts and the IGF constitute sources of good governance that merit further support, while the creation of a new Public Procurement Verification Commission provides a new opportunity for good governance. Moreover, these public control institutions can provide the public partner to groups in civil society in collaborative efforts to push for more accountability. In addition, an anti-corruption initiative targeting the delivery of services at the local level can be strengthened through the involvement of public control institutions, which could carry out audits or assessments in these service sectors. For example, these institutions could assist in reviewing systems for recording the arrival and disposition of medical commodities donated by USAID and in verifying the implementation of prior recommendations.

For this reason, RTI will provide technical assistance, offer training workshops, and potentially provide limited equipment to these public control institutions. We will use a participatory operational diagnostic to guide our support to these organizations. The support will emphasize collaboration with civil society groups to oversee government activities, publicize findings and advocate for corrective action. The support will also emphasize collaboration with other government institutions in the investigation and prosecution of cases on the one hand and in the assessment of corrective actions taken by audited institutions on the other hand.

Sub IR 2.2 Strengthened ability of civil society organizations to fight corruption

Civil society groups can benefit from capacity building and an improved legal framework for their activities. Capacity building consists of training and technical assistance in monitoring government activities, conducting awareness-raising campaigns, and proposing new legislation such as a Freedom of Information law, whistleblower protection, financial disclosure requirements and laws against illicit enrichment and bribery. In addition to these programmatic areas, CSOs can benefit from assistance with developing partnerships and finding alternative sources of financial support. In the B-DACS program, RTI will therefore work with selected CSOs in these areas.

B-DACs Anti-Corruption Annual Report Indicators

Strategic Objective: Improved governance in social and productive sectors	
IR 2 Strengthened mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability	
Sub IR 2.1 Increased investigation and verification capacities of GOB auditing (control) institutions	Sub IR 2.2 Strengthened Ability of Civil Society Organizations to fight Corruption
Number of public accts audited and reported on annually by a) Inspector General des Finances, and b) Chamber of Accounts of the Supreme Court	Score on anti-corruption legislation and enforcement matrix
% of bids which comply with public procurement bidding procedures, as set forth by the new code of procurement	Progress and impact of action taken by the Beninese government to reduce corruption, based on assessment made by an independent committee

4. Other information related to program progress and results.

A. Decentralization Component

Use of Departmental Technical Services

One observation from the Phase II implementation of the micro grants programs is that the communes are not making full use of the departmental technical services available to them for the design and implementation of the projects. The departmental technical services offer expertise that is sorely needed including the areas of education, health, economic analysis, construction and planning. The principal barrier to communes being able to tap the technical assistance of the departmental technical services is that the communes must pay for these services and with their limited budgets they find this difficult. One example of this is the involvement of the Departmental Direction of Environment, Housing and Urbanization (DDEHU) in the certification and monitoring of construction projects. According to a Government of Benin ordinance made in 1976, the DDEHU must receive 3% of construction budgets so that they can monitor these projects for quality and adherence to construction guidelines. Most communes are unwilling or unable to pay this fee for DDEHU services. Some communes only submit their blueprints in order to obtain an authorization to proceed. Others prefer to use local commune

construction services, which have no authority to certify the quality of the blueprints and the works. During the Lokossa and Parakou workshops the commune officials participating questioned the rationale for paying the 3%, discussed the possibility of a waiver for the communes for payment of the fee, or asking the DDEHU to consider it as a contribution by the government in the financing of micro-grants projects. This issue is being discussed among NGOs, the Communes, the DDEHU and the Departmental Direction of Development Planning in Mono and Couffo. A number of Mayors intend to undertake advocacy to urge Regional authorities to make a decision.

Partnership Opportunities

The recruitment and placing of the field coordinators in Borgou/Alibori and Mono-Couffo has increased partnership opportunities for RTI. We have had better contact with several organizations including SNV, PLAN-BENIN and AIDE et ACTION and have shared strategies and tools and discussed joint initiatives with each group.

Mayors' Commitment to B-DACS

In general the mayors in the target communes have been receptive to B-DACS calls for greater involvement of women and civil society in programs and greater transparency and good governance. Their acceptance of program themes and requirements is a positive sign. Illustrative of this collaboration is their decision to assign a specific staff person in each commune to collect B-DACS indicators for both their own use and that of RTI.

B. Anti-Corruption Component

RTI was in contact this past 3 ½ months with the International Development Law Organization based in Italy on possible collaboration for support to the supreme audit institutions in Benin. One possibility discussed was IDLO's Alumni Association (API) in Benin leveraging additional resources or combining strategies to address anti-corruption in Benin.

IV. ATTACHMENTS

- A. Success Story: Enhancing Accountability for Communal Officers
- B. Micro-project Public-Private Partnership Efforts

ATTACHMENT A. Success Story: Enhancing Accountability for Communal Officers

Benin's change from a top-down command form of government now means that local communal officers have increased responsibilities in areas of community project design, implementation and evaluation and accountability for government resources. Mayors, technical officials and tax collectors all have a new set of responsibilities, but not all have a full understanding of their new roles. RTI's USAID Benin Decentralization Support Program has helped address this need not only through training programs aimed at these officials but through targeted on-the-job technical assistance.



For example, in Bembérékè Commune in Borgou Department, RTI awarded a USAID funded micro-grant to help construct 4 latrines for the public school. Because of this USAID funding this school with several hundred students have latrine facilities for the first time thus helping promote hygiene and sanitation. However RTI's USAID funded-project has done much more than help address this need – it has been a means to help communal officers develop and implement a community project within the framework of the new decentralization laws.

The technical staff of the mayor's office was given advice on how to prepare and plan a project proposal. Once the micro-project was approved for funding, RTI provided a check to the communal government for 50% of the approved funding (the commune also contributed over 35% of the costs). Initially the tax-collector at the commune did not want to accept the check saying all other donors directly fund their activities. RTI's agent had to explain Beninese decentralization laws that provide that community projects within the approved development plan should all be incorporated within the communal budget and accounted for by the tax collector and managed by the Mayor. RTI's strategy was to empower the communal officers to do their jobs within the new decentralization system – and unlike other donors - not develop their own parallel unsustainable financial system.

During the micro-project implementation process, RTI helped the commune officials understand the procedures to award a contract. The tax collector was also given information on the documentation and signatures that were necessary for each step of the process. These steps included, prior to final payment, an inspection and detailing of all reservations noted regarding outstanding work to be completed. In the case of Bembérékè, the tax collector has followed all procedures and even made the final payment based on the approval of all works by the mayor. In fact, however, RTI's recent visit to the site has revealed that while the latrines are in use, the outstanding work on the latrines was never completed. While this is regrettable, what the RTI technical support has provided is a means to ensure accountability. Because the proper paperwork is in place it is clear the Mayor is at fault for having approved payment before the latrines were completely finished. Respecting procedures, ensuring a paper trail of decision making and creating a means to assign responsibilities is also a key strategy to fight corruption.

In the case of Bembèrèkè it is fortunate that RTI's agent also urged the Commune to make sure the latrine construction contractor sign a one year guarantee on the work. This was done, so the commune still has a legal basis to insist that the latrines be completed to standards as foreseen by the original contract. USAID's assistance in Bembèrèkè is thus not only helping communities meet immediate needs but, more importantly for the long term, also helping establish a transparent and effective local government system.

Versions of this story have been repeated in numerous communes where RTI is providing assistance. Commune officials are learning by doing – developing the practical technical competence to run their commune governments according to Beninese law and, despite facing periodic glitches, becoming empowered to do their jobs.

ATTACHMENT B. Micro-Project Public Private Partnership Efforts

N°	Department Commune Activity	USAID Financing	Local Financing	Micro-project Amount (Total)	Information on Commune contribution	Private / Community Contribution	Other Associated Information	Win-Win-Win
1	Mono Comé Construction of 4 market stalls in Comé	4,661,000	1,286,020	5,947,020	1/ Commune has committed a cash input of 986,020 CFA of which 400,020 is to be provided to APRETECTRA for training activities on Strategies for Proper and Equitable Collection of Market Fees. 2/ 586,000 cash is contributed to construction. This along with RTI grant of 4,661,000 goes to local builder.	1/ APRETECTRA helped commune develop the Communal Development Plan and the proposal to RTI for construction of the hangars. 2/ Women's Market association has contributed in-kind by providing water for construction and guarding building materials.	1/ Commune has contracted local NGO DENSEL 2000 for collecting garbage at market. Monthly contract of 120,000 CFA. 2/ Local contractor awarded building contract.	1/ LG wins because of increase in market fees collected and happier constituents. 2/ Market women win because of more organized and hygienic market and improved infrastructure fore their work. 3/ Local NGOs and local builder win by obtaining contracts.
2	Mono Grand-Popo Construction of 4 market stalls in Grand-Popo	4,661,000	1,286,020	5,947,020	1/ Commune has committed a cash input of 986,020 CFA of which 400,020 is to be provided to APRETECTRA for training activities on Strategies for Proper and Equitable Collection of Market Fees. 2/ 586,000 cash is contributed to construction. This along with RTI grant of 4,661,000 goes to local builder.	1/ NGO- APRETECTRA helped commune develop the Communal Development Plan and the proposal to RTI for construction of the hangars.	Local contractor awarded building contract.	1/ LG wins because of increase in market fees collected and happier constituents. 2/ Local NGO and local builder win by obtaining contracts.
3	Mono Lokossa Construction of a 2 classroom block at the public primary school Tozounmè/B	4,999,979	4,999,979	9,999,958	The commune government and civil society have committed a contribution of 4.999.979 f cfa.	1/ The PTA is monitoring/supervising project progress.		1/ The students and teachers from Tozounmè/B win because they have improved facilities. 2/ Local contractor wins contract.

	Mono							
	Sub-total 1	14,321,979	7,572,019	21,893,998				
4	Couffo Toviklin Construction of a kindergarten in Toviklin - a block that includes a classroom + office + warehouse + furnishings	4,798,944	899,546	5,698,490	The commune government has committed 899.546 cfa. of this: 85.000 for installation of the "chantier" - 123.465 for "implantation du bâtiment" - 51.744 for "fouilles en rigoles" - 13.168 "remblais provenant des fouilles" - 88.950 "remblais en terre d'apport" - 250.000 for child benches - 100.000 for tabourets - 30.000 for a teacher's desk - 20.000 teacher's chairs)	1/ The PTA is supporting the cost of administration and monitoring micro project progress. 2/The community participates through labor. This participation has not been quantified.		1/ The students and teacher from the kindergarten of TOVIKLIN win by having better facilities. 2/ Local contractor wins contract.
5	Couffo Klouékanmey Construction of 2 market stalls in Klouékanmè	2,494,137	454,570	2,948,707	Community participation is evaluated at 454.570 f cfa through their labor.	The community has made an in-kind contribution evaluated at 454.570 f cfa (150.000 for consult fees for preparation of micro project document - 200.000 for "frais de réalisation du plan architectural" - 93.290 for "installation de chantier" - and 11.280 for "provenant des fouilles")		1/ The local government wins as improved market generates increased fee revenue. 2/Market women win by having better conditions and potentially more clients.
6	Couffo Lalo Construction de magasin de stockage dans le marché de HLAAMEY	3,000,000	769,674	3,769,674	Financial contribution of 319.674 f cfa	Community in-kind contribution of 450.000 f cfa.		1/ The local government wins as improved market generates increased fee revenue. 2/Market women win by having better conditions and potentially more clients.

7	Couffo Djakotomey Construction of 3 latrines. 1 in Kpoba Market, 1 in Adjintimey Market and 1 at the town office of Djakotomey.	2,550,000	450,000	3,000,000		The community has contributed through labor evaluated at 450.000 f cfa.		1/ The local government wins because latrine usage will generate revenue. 2/ Market women win due to improved sanitation.
	Couffo							
	Sub-total 2	12,843,081	2,573,790	15,416,871				
8	Alibori Gogounou Construction of a butchery in Gounarou	5,000,000	1,475,884	6,475,884	In-kind and cash contributions	Community contribution has not been quantified. The butchers are associated and help in decision making.		1/ The local government wins since the new butchery block will generate more revenue 2/The butchers and public win with improved conditions for meat preparation.
9	Alibori Kandi Manufacturing of 180 school benches for primary schools in Angaradébou and Sam	2,650,000	547,520	3,197,520	Financial contribution of 547.520 f cfa.			1/ 260 students win by having improved conditions. 2/ Local entrepreneur wins contract.
10	Alibori Karimama Manufacturing of 210 school benches for 4 primary schools in Karimama	3,570,000	630,000	4,200,000	630.000 for transport cost			1/ 420 students win by having improved conditions. 2/ Local entrepreneur wins contract.
	Alibori							
	Sub-Total 3	11,220,000	2,653,404	13,873,404				

11	Borgou Tchaourou Manufacturing of 212 school benches for public primary schools in Tchaourou	3,709,745	1,075,988	4,785,733	Financial contribution of 637.500 f cfa.	PTA to be associated.		1/ students win by having improved conditions. 2/ Local entrepreneur wins contract.
12	Borgou Bembèrèkè Construction of 4 latrines with four doors in 4 schools: Bembèrèkè, Gbian, Tahiti, Kouba-peulh	3,237,888	1,762,112	5,000,000	Financial contribution of 1.762.112 f cfa	1/ PTA Association to supervise work.		1/ students win by having improved conditions. 2/ Local entrepreneur wins contract.
13	Borgou Pèrèrè Construction of 3 latrines. 1 Pèrèrè market, 1 in the Circumscription scolaire and 1 in Pèrèrè school.	2,550,000	531,000	3,081,000	Financial contribution of 531.000 fcfa			1/ Market clients and youth in Pèrèrè by improved conditions. 2/ Local entrepreneur wins contract.
	Borgou							
	Sub-Total 4	9,497,633	3,369,100	12,866,733				
	TOTAL	47,882,693	16,168,313	64,051,006				